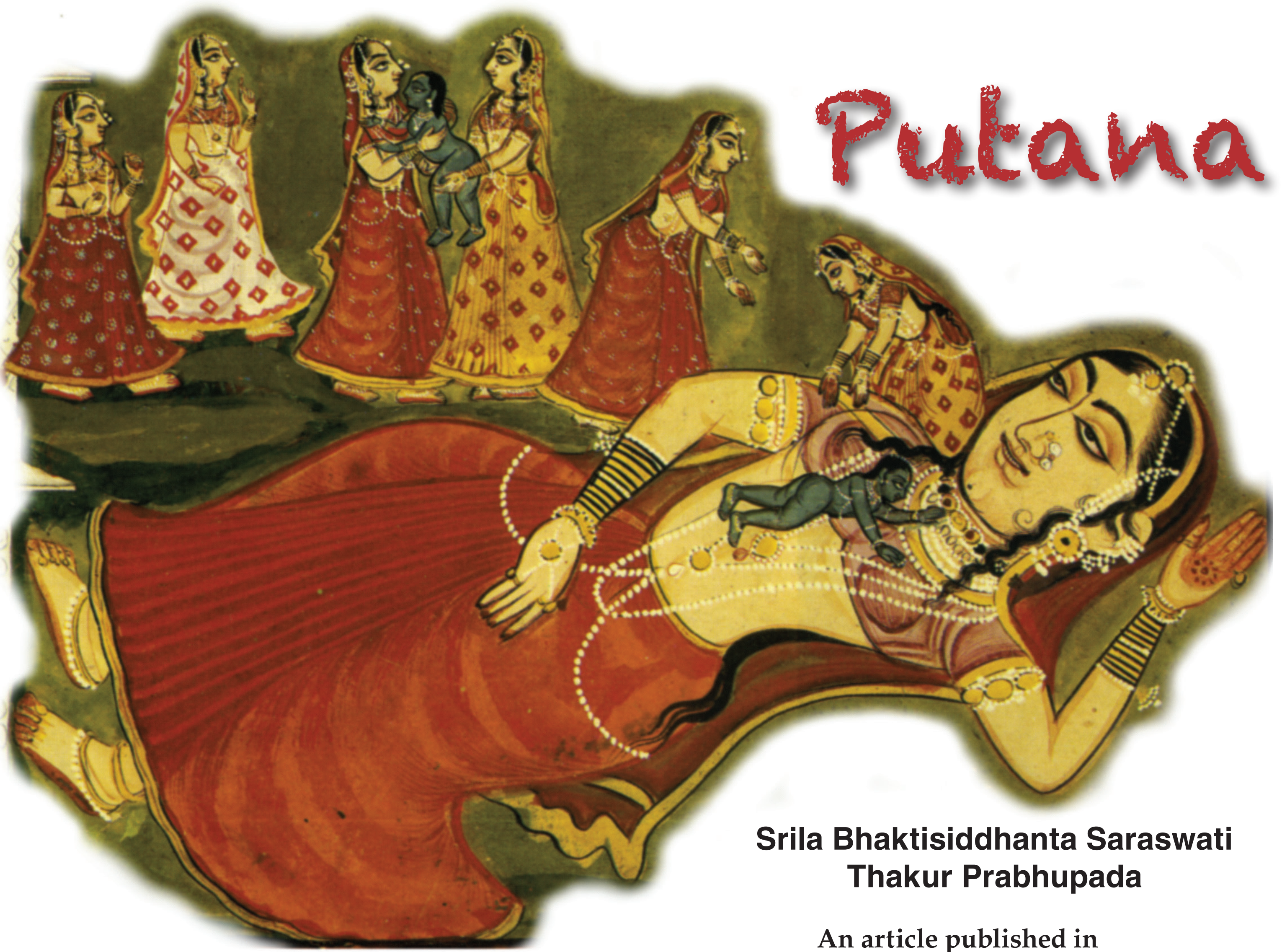
Putana



From an 18th century Rajasthani painting. Artist unknown.

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King Kamsa is the typical aggressive empiricist, ever on the lookout for the appearance of the truth in order to suppress him before he has time to develop. This is not an exaggeration of the essence of the empiricist's position. The materialist has a natural repugnance for the transcendental. He is disposed to think that faith in the incomprehensible is the parent of the dogmatism and hypocrisy that flourish in the guise of religion. He is also equally under the delusion that there is no dividing line between the material and the spiritual. He is strengthened in his delusion by the scriptural interpretations of like-minded persons. This includes all the lexicographic interpreters. ["Lexicographic" means "strict dictionary meaning".]

The lexicographical interpretation is upheld by Kamsa as the real scientific explanation of the dread of and aversion for the transcendental. These lexicographical interpreters are employed by Kamsa in putting down the first suspected appearance of any genuine faith in the transcendental. King Kamsa knows very well that if faith in the transcendental is once allowed to grow it is sure to upset all his empiric prospects.

There is historical ground for his concerns. Accordingly, if the empiric domination is to be preserved intact it would be necessary not to lose a moment to put down the transcendental heresy the instant it threatens to make its appearance in earnest. King Kamsa, acting on this traditional fear, is never slow to take the scientific precaution of deputing empiric teachers of the scriptures, backed by the resources of dictionary


18th century Rajasthani painting. Artist unknown.

The cowherd men burn Putana under the direction of Nanda Maharaja

and grammar and all empiric subtleties, to put down, by presenting specious arguments based on hypothetical principles, the true interpretation of the eternal religion revealed by the scriptures.

Kamsa is convinced that faith in the transcendental can be effectively rooted out by empiricism if prompt and decisive measures are adopted at the very outset. He attributes the failure of atheism in the past to the neglect of the adoption of such measures before the theistic fallacy has had time to spread among the fanatical masses.

Sri Krishna manifests his eternal birth in the pure consciousness of the serving soul who is located above all mundane limitations. When Krishna is born, he is able to upset all sinister designs against those who are apprised by himself of his advent. The apparently causeless faith displayed by persons irrespective of age, sex, and condition may confound all rabid empiricists who are on principle averse to the absolute truth, whose appearance is utterly incompatible with the domination of empiricism.

But no adverse efforts of the empiricists, whose rule seems till then to be perfectly well-established over the minds of the deluded souls of this world, can dissuade any person from exclusively following the truth when he actually manifests his birth in the pure consciousness of the soul.

Putana is the slayer of all infants. The baby, when he or she comes out of the mother's womb, falls at once into the hands of the pseudo-teachers of religion. These teachers are successful in forestalling the attempts of the good preceptor, whose help is never sought by the atheists of this world at the baptisms of their babies. This is ensured by the arrangements of all established churches of the world. They have been successful only in supplying watchful Putanas for effecting the spiritual destruction of persons from the moment of their birth with the cooperation of their worldly



India, Guler, circa 1780-90

parents. No human contrivance can prevent these Putanas from obtaining possession of the pulpits. This is due to the general prevalence of atheistic disposition in the people of this world.

The church that has the best chance of survival in this damned world is that of atheism under the convenient guise of theism. The churches have always proved to be the staunchest upholders of the grossest form of worldliness from which even the worst of non-ecclesiastical criminals are found to recoil.

It is not from any deliberate opposition to the ordained clergy that these observations are made. The original purpose of the established churches of the world may not always be objectionable. But no stable religious arrangement for instructing the masses has yet been successful. The Supreme Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, in pursuance of the teachings of the scriptures, mandates all absence of conventionalism for the teachers of the eternal religion. It does not follow from this, however, that the mechanical adoption of the unconventional life by any person will make him a fit teacher of religion. Regulation is necessary for controlling the inherent worldliness of conditioned souls.

But no mechanical regulation has any value, even for such a purpose. The bona-fide teacher of religion is neither any product of nor the favorer of any mechanical system. In his hands, no system has likewise the chance of degenerating into a lifeless arrangement. The mere pursuit of fixed doctrines and fixed liturgies cannot hold a person to the true spirit of doctrine or liturgy.

The idea of an organized church in an intelligible form, indeed, marks the close of the living spiritual movement. The great ecclesiastical establishments are the dikes and the dams to retain the current that cannot be held by any such contrivances. They, indeed, indicate a desire on the part of the masses to exploit a spiritual movement for their own purpose. They also unmistakably indicate the end of the absolute and unconventional guidance of the bona fide spiritual teacher. The people of this world understand preventive systems; they have no idea at all of the unprevented positive eternal life. Neither can there be any earthly contrivance for the permanent preservation of the life eternal on this mundane plane on the popular scale.

They are, therefore, greatly mistaken who are disposed to look forward to the amelioration of the worldly state in any worldly sense due to the worldly success of any truly spiritual movement. It is such worldly expectants ["Expectants" means "persons who are expectant or hopeful".] who become the patrons of the mischievous race of the pseudo-teachers of religion, the Putanas, whose congenial function is to stifle the theistic disposition at the very moment of its suspected appearance. But the theistic disposition can never be stifled by the efforts of those Putanas. The Putanas have power only over the atheists. They perform a thankless but salutary task for the benefit of their unwilling victims.

But as soon as theistic disposition proper makes its appearance in the pure consciousness of the awakened soul, the Putanas are decisively silenced at the very earliest stage of their encounter with new-born Krishna. The would-be slayer is herself slain. This is the reward of the negative services that the Putanas unwittingly render to the cause of theism by strangling all hypocritical demonstrations against their own hypocrisy. But Putana does not at all like to receive her reward in the only form that involves the total destruction of her wrong personality. King Kamsa also does not like to lose the services of the most trusted of his agents. The effective silencing of the whole race of pseudo-teachers of religion is the first clear indication of the appearance of the absolute on the mundane plane. The bona-fide teacher of the absolute heralds the advent of Krishna by his uncompromising campaign against the pseudo-teachers of religion.

